

# Solidarity

Issue No. 99 / February 2017

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# RISE UP AGAINST

# RACISM

# STOP

# TRUMP

# STOP

# TURNBULL



## TRUMP

Racist agenda builds on Obama legacy

## MARXIST THEORY

What do we mean by socialism?

## 1917

Russia's February revolution 100 years on



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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning, in the interests of human need not profit.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, against racism and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists.

Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency. Visit our web site at [www.solidarity.net.au/about-us](http://www.solidarity.net.au/about-us) for more information on what we stand for.

## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

### Sydney

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## Things they say

**He is starting at an extreme position and ultimately you can get a better outcome**

Mike Kane, CEO of Boral, on Donald Trump

**In a lot of ways I like his transparency and strength**

Peter Morgan, billionaire investor, on Trump

**Clearly a big personality**

Joe Hockey searches for a diplomatic way to describe President Trump

**The wall is going to be a great wall. And it is a wall negotiated by me and the price is going to come down**

US President Donald Trump...who else?

**We've got a lot of killers. What, you think our country's so innocent?**

Trump, responding to a reporters concern that he wanted to "get along" with Russian President Putin, a known killer.

**We believe we are in the middle of an energy transition that is unstoppable and we want to be in the vanguard of that.**

Shell's global chief executive Ben van Buerden. Shell just happens to own Australia's biggest undeveloped onshore gas resources in the Arrow coal seam gas venture.

**It could have been for parties, I don't know... It's four years ago. I can't remember payments of \$15 million.** Clive Palmer when asked about \$15 million Queensland Nickel paid to his personal account in 2012.

**I'm happy to give him my money and if he wants more money just tell him to write me a letter because I love him so much**

Clive Palmer when asked about the \$8 million loan to his father-in-law

**They're more sophisticated because in this chamber, since they've been here, they've supported important pieces of Government legislation, they've been prepared to work with us.**

Liberal Senator Arthur Sinodinos talking about One Nation

**We don't interfere with the content. I just want the profit.**

Chinese billionaire (and Communist Party member) Wang Jianlin responding to suggestions that Trump might curb Chinese investment in Hollywood

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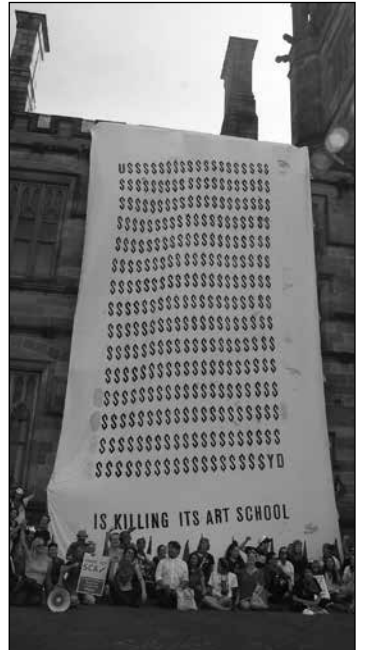
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# INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

## Uber scabs for Trump

RIDE HAILING app Uber has been hit by a massive backlash after the company encourage strike-breaking during a Taxi drivers strike in New York. The one-hour strike was called by New York taxi driver to protest Trump's racist travel ban on 28 January. It coincided with a mass protest at JFK International airport. Bhairavi Desai of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance told *Democracy Now*:

"We were outraged by the so-called executive order... it's absolutely inhumane and cruel. And we are a workforce that's largely Muslim and Sikh. And we know that, you know, when the flames of Islamophobia are fanned... it has a ripple effect... taxi drivers, who are 20 times more likely to be killed on the job than any other worker, have often been the workers that have been the victims of hate crimes."

Uber not only continued to run services to and from JFK, but even de-activated "surge pricing" to keep down fares. The company immediately faced a social media campaign under the hashtag #deleteUber encouraging people to delete their Uber account. Uber CEO Travis Kalanick, had agreed to work with Trump by sitting on his business advisory council. The wave of outrage has now forced him to resign.

## Rage as French cops say black man raped 'by accident'

FRENCH POLICE bashed and raped a young black with a baton in February. An internal investigation then claimed that it was an "accident" and that his pants had "slipped down on their own."

The youth worker, Theo, intervened after he saw a group of police slap another young black man during a stop and search. Theo was set upon by police, who dragged him to a notorious CCTV blind-spot, raped him and spat on him while hurling racist abuse. The head of the police union even said publicly that the verbal abuse was "just about appropriate".

Theo required surgery and his injuries may be permanent. Anger erupted as 5000 people protested in Paris. Half of all police officers are expected to vote for the fascist Front National in the coming presidential election.

## Dylan Voller free at last



DYLAN VOLLER was released from prison in February, following protests demanding his freedom. He is completing a 16 week rehabilitation program in Alice Springs where he can visit his family. Last year *Four Corners* exposed the vicious abuse Dylan suffered at the hands of guards in the Don Dale juvenile detention centre in Darwin. Dylan has been locked up for petty crimes since age 12, with just one and a half years outside custody. He was subjected to constant dehumanising abuse by guards including physical assault, being stripped naked, long periods in solitary confinement and notoriously being strapped down in a spit hood.

Dylan, now 19, was serving time for an incident in 2014. The Royal Commission examining youth detention and "child protection" in the NT revealed that this offence occurred straight after Dylan was released from extended solitary confinement in Don Dale. He bravely testified at the Royal Commission despite threats against him from prison guards, saying "young people need love and someone to talk to, not to be locked in a cell" and condemning systemic racism in the prisons.

NT Labor Chief Minister Michael Gunner took office just after the Don Dale scandal, promising change. But his government twice opposed parole for Dylan Voller. At the February parole hearing, NT Government lawyers argued that Voller's treatment in Don Dale had been justified and should not result in a shortened prison term. Also in February, Gunner insisted that police should be able to use tasers on children, after an NT Children's Court ruled that the tasing of a 12-year-old Aboriginal boy in Darwin last November had been unlawful.

## Emmet Till accuser finally admits to false evidence

SIXTY-TWO YEARS later, there is finally confirmation that the woman at the heart of the historic Emmet Till lynching case in the US gave false evidence. Emmet was a 14-year-old black boy lynched in Mississippi in 1955. The murder and the subsequent trial was a catalyst for the black civil rights movement. Till allegedly wolf-whistled at white woman, Carolyn Bryant, outside a grocery store. Her husband Roy and his half-brother abducted, mutilated and shot the boy a few days later, dumping his body in a river. Horrific photos of his disfigured corpse galvanised opposition to racist Southern segregation and lynch-mob justice.

The two killers were acquitted by an all-white jury but, protected from double jeopardy, admitted to the murder in an interview with *Look* magazine just months later.

During the trial Carolyn Bryant testified that Till had grabbed her and addressed her in sexually crude terms. Historian Timothy B. Dyson says she told him in a 2008 interview, "that part is not true." Dyson has just published a book containing the interview, *The Blood of Emmett Till*.

Research and writing by  
Adam Adelpour

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THE SYSTEM to [solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

## Disabled Norfolk Islanders told to work

THE FEDERAL government takeover of Norfolk Island has seen disabled residents thrown off their pensions. Welfare services were taken over by Canberra in June when the island surrendered its autonomy. One man, David McGowan, had his application rejected in August despite the fact he was already an amputee. He suffered a heart attack and was admitted to intensive care in Sydney the same month. He told Fairfax, "I am a 63-year-old, above-the-knee amputee who's recovering from a massive heart attack and I've been rejected for disability support. It's just crazy."

The Department of Human Services (DHS) wrote to him with a list of suggested jobs including taxi driver, tram driver, security guard and gaming attendant. McGowan told Fairfax, "The cardiologist said I will never be able to hold a commercial driver's licence because of my heart condition and yet the DHS have suggested I become a taxi driver or a tram driver, notwithstanding the fact there are no trams on the island."

Greg Magri, was kicked off the disability pension despite being on it for 15 years. He has a brain injury caused by a stroke. He is now on Newstart which leaves him \$150 a week worse off. He was told the decision was made because he hadn't registered with a disability employment service—but none existed on the Island until last July.

## Ex-Labor Premier to lobby for the banks

FORMER QUEENSLAND Labor Premier Anna Bligh has taken on the job as head of the Australian Bankers Association. Bligh will be paid to lobby former colleagues in an effort to protect the banks' obscene profits.

Already she is a new found opponent of a banking Royal Commission. With the Commonwealth Bank posting a half-year profit of \$4.9 billion in February, she has her work cut out for her.

# EDITORIAL

## Resist racism as Turnbull backs Trump and fans the far right

DONALD TRUMP'S ban on Muslims and refugees entering the US has ignited demonstrations across the US and across the world. Malcolm Turnbull distinguished himself as practically the only world leader to support the appalling, racist ban.

Canada offered to accept refugees turned away by the US. Yet Turnbull praised Trump for his decision to "emulate" Australia's policies and for his focus on "the importance of border security". Treasurer Scott Morrison boasted that the US was "catching up" with Australia.

Turnbull is also desperate to avoid offending Trump, as he clings to the hope that the US will resettle refugees from Manus Island and Nauru.

It took days before Labor leader Bill Shorten half-heartedly criticised the Muslim ban.

Trump's election victory has spawned a race to the bottom in Australian politics, with both sides of politics aping versions of Trump's populism. Government-sponsored Islamophobia and scaremongering about terrorism is giving legitimacy to the likes of One Nation, Cory Bernardi and Liberal National Party MP George Christensen.

Cory Bernardi has now left the Liberals to form his own hardline Conservative party. One Nation and Pauline Hanson have climbed in the polls and are eagerly eyeing off the upcoming state elections in WA and Queensland where they hope to win seats.

Turnbull and the Liberals have given up any idea of putting One Nation last at the ballot box. Turnbull now says that One Nation "deserves respect".

The preference deal between the WA Liberals and One Nation may well give One Nation the balance of power in Western Australia. One poll in Queensland has One Nation on 23 per cent, enough to beat their 1998 result when they won 11 seats.

Turnbull has unleashed Immigration Minister Peter Dutton to stir up racism and division. Late last year Dutton blamed the entire Lebanese Muslim community for terrorism in Australia, saying it was a "mistake" that any of them had ever been let into the country. Now Dutton is pushing for Trump-like powers, allowing him to target people from any particular country to review and cancel their visas. He told Sky News he is also



**Above: Thousands hit the streets here to oppose Trump's ban and Turnbull's efforts to keep out refugees**

considering a new, tougher citizenship test for migrants.

Like Trump, the government wants to present Muslims and refugees as threats that they will keep out of the country.

### Cuts

At the same time Turnbull is pushing savage cuts to welfare. He wants to cut \$3 billion in government spending. This comes hot on the heels of the Centrelink debt fiasco, with around 200,000 people receiving letters demanding repayment of fake debts.

He wants to make young people under 25 wait five weeks before they can access unemployment benefits, and force them onto the lower Youth Allowance payment, robbing them of \$90 a fortnight. Also on the table are cuts to parenting payments.

While, so far, the cuts have been blocked in the Senate, the government's response is to threaten to cut \$3 billion from the NDIS.

Yet the Liberals are still pushing for corporate tax cuts to put \$48 billion back into the pockets of the rich.

Along with refugee and Muslim-bashing, Turnbull is stepping up the union-bashing. After caving in to pressure from Turnbull, Senators Derryn Hinch and Nick Xenophon changed their vote. Now, the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) will come fully into force by September.

Everyone needs to get behind the

CFMEU construction union's campaign to fight the ABCC.

At an Adelaide construction workers' rally, CFMEU national secretary Dave Noonan said the union was, "going to the streets... We'll be back right across Australia and the industry will stop and workers will go to rallies and they will say enough is enough."

These words have to be turned into action. This is the kind of fight that can beat back Turnbull and the right.

A 400-strong Melbourne rally backed by the public servants' union demanded Turnbull end the Centrelink debt fiasco, and negotiate a pay increase for Centrelink workers.

The Palm Sunday rallies for refugees can be major demonstrations to finally close the detention prisons on Nauru and Manus Island.

The real threat to jobs and services for working class people comes not from Muslims. It comes from corporations and governments greedy for profit.

We need to build every bit of resistance to Turnbull and Trump. And build a socialist organisation that fights to link the fight against racism with the fight for jobs, union rights and funding for schools, hospitals and universities.

The demonstrations against Trump have been an inspiration for everyone who wants to fight for a better world, free of racism, sexism and the threat of war. If you want to be part of that fight, join us.

.....  
**Like Trump, the government wants to present Muslims and refugees as threats that they will keep out**

# NSW disability workers strike against privatisation

By Miro Sandev

NSW DISABILITY support workers have defied a legal order to strike for 24 hours, in a bid to halt the state government's callous privatisation push.

The industrial tribunal had earlier ordered the union to cancel the industrial action. The Public Service Association, the union representing the workers, decided to go ahead with an illegal strike on 14 February and risk the potential fine.

Several hundred workers rallied and marched on Parliament House, chanting "NSW not for sale".

"For the workers it means a lot less conditions and pay, \$20,000 a year probably," said Trevor Cochrane, a union delegate in a group home in Castle Hill. "What that represents is less security, so it means less continuity with the care of the clients, whereas now with the government service we have staff working with clients 15-20 years."

The government is aiming to privatise services employing over 6000 workers across the state by 2018, forcing the workers into the lower-paid not-for-profit (NFP) and private sector. It is cynically using the national rollout of the NDIS as cover for the privatisation by claiming this will provide more choice for patients.

But there will be no choice for patients who want to stay in government run services with carers that have looked after them for years, they will have to face the market.

The government is providing workers only a two-year job guarantee, which means they can be sacked immediately after that. There is no guarantee of current wages and conditions so penalty rates, shift allowances and other benefits will be cut as organisations face the pressures of the competitive NDIS market.

The vast majority of workers are employed in NFP organisations, but these are under the same competitive pressures as for-profits and squeeze their workers in the same ways. Trevor said that many experienced staff will leave disability services because of the worse conditions.

"There's a lot of casual employment out there in the private and NFP sector rather than permanent, so the client will see one staff member one week, and then another the next week," Trevor said.

Trevor said this strike was just the



**Above: Disability support workers rally outside NSW parliament**

beginning, with the government aiming to complete its privatisation drive by the middle of next year. Disability services all across the country are facing privatisation.

"Assuming this state falls to privatisation in disability services, the other states will probably follow," he said. "But if we can reverse it now, there's a chance it will become a precedent."

## Police still denying justice for Palm Island

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE on Palm Island scored a small victory in December with a court finding police guilty of racial discrimination. But killer cop Chris Hurley has still not been brought to justice.

The Federal Court ruled that Queensland police racially discriminated against them in the investigation of the murder of Aboriginal man Mulrunji Doomadgee and the brutal police repression following riots there in 2004.

The Court found the police acted with a "sense of impunity, impervious to the reactions and perceptions of Palm Islanders, and very much with an 'us and them' attitude".

The island erupted when an autopsy report said the death was a result of a fall, with the courthouse, police station and the police barracks all burnt to the ground.

The government declared a state of emergency and sent in 80 extra police including the Tactical Response Group. Police kicked in doors and terrorised families even though the protests had long finished.

Lex Wotton, who filed the racial discrimination suit, had a stun gun used on the back of his legs during a raid while his 15-year-old daughter

had a rifle pointed at her head. The family were awarded \$220,000 in compensation.

Shamefully, the Queensland Labor government has joined the police in appealing the verdict. Several federal Labor MPs, including shadow services minister Linda Burney, as well as a number of Queensland state Labor MPs have publicly criticised the Queensland government.

Senior constable Chris Hurley was responsible for Doomadgee's death, yet remained on the island while the investigation into the killing was conducted.

The investigating officers were Hurley's friends and he was never treated as a suspect.

He was acquitted of manslaughter by an all-white jury in 2007. The racist police force promoted him into a plum job on the Gold Coast. Since then he has continued to abuse his power, and has been convicted of a number of assaults.

The Queensland state protected Hurley for too long. His career now appears over, not because he committed a racist murder but because his latest conviction, in January, was for assaulting another cop.

**Mark Gillespie**

**The NSW government aims to privatise services employing over 6000 workers across the state by 2018**



## Sydney College of the Arts shows how to fight the corporate uni

By Adam Adelpour

THE CAMPAIGN to save Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) has shown students across the country how to fight an increasingly corporate university system that puts profit before students, staff and quality education.

In December, the university conceded that some classes would continue at SCA's current location until the end of 2018, with no move planned for this year.

In mid-2016 the University of Sydney announced a plan to close SCA under the guise of a "merger" with the University of NSW College of Art and Design.

This would have spelled the end of the art school. SCA occupies a historic location in heritage buildings at Kirkbride in Rozelle. But in the words of Vice Chancellor Michael Spence the satellite campus was an "unnecessary expenditure".

The campaign mobilised through mass meetings which built quickly into mass protests on the door-step of university management in Camperdown.

After a hundreds strong protest stormed the new \$180 million business school to protest a University Senate meeting, the UNSW deal collapsed.

After the merger was scrapped the university wheeled out a new proposal to "move" SCA to Camperdown campus. The proposal included savage cuts in the course of the move. Sixty per cent of staff were to face the sack and the specialised jewellery, glass and ceramics studios were to be shut down.

The second proposal to smash SCA was met with an extraordinary wave of protest.

The Dean's office and the entire upper floor of the SCA admin building were occupied for 65 days—the longest occupation in the history of Sydney Uni.

Mass actions built in the lead up to and during the occupation galvanised SCA students, staff, unions and the wider community around the cause. The barrage against management was relentless. There was a one-day SCA student strike and several demonstrations at the main campus, a vigil at the Art Gallery of NSW and a "day of disruption" at main campus during a 48-hour student strike.

The defiant struggle claimed



**Above: Rallying at Sydney Uni during the first SCA student strike**

victory after victory. The SCA Dean Colin Rhodes, who was the public face of the UNSW "merger", was toppled and forced to resign.

The university was forced to delay its original plan by 12 months and their attempt to sack 60 per cent of staff has been severely dented.

Originally they wanted to make up to 15 full-time academic job cuts. The figure in the current proposal is half that. In addition the university has been forced to re-open the possibility of glass, ceramics and jewellery continuing in some limited form. These are real wins.

### Still under threat

The heroic struggle and the important concessions that have been won show there is nothing inevitable about our universities being forced into a corporate mould. Resistance works.

But the art school is still under serious threat as the university pushes ahead with its plans. Staff continue to suffer. Between March and April a "spill and fill" process will begin.

If it goes ahead this process will eventually see virtually every staff member made redundant. Even those who continue to be employed will be cruelly forced to re-apply for their jobs.

Elsewhere at the university this has been a cover for cost cutting. Staff positions are cynically re-named and when staff re-apply

they find their pay levels have been lowered.

In early February Sydney Uni released a "spill and fill" proposal for the Science Faculty that affects 90 jobs; many of the new positions are similar to the old ones but at lower pay.

These nasty corporate tactics must be fought every step of the way. Staff deserve respect.

### Fight the Corporate Uni

The fight to save SCA has shown struggle works and has set the bar for how to fight uni cuts across Sydney Uni and the country.

At Sydney Uni the attack on SCA is continuing amid a university-wide "restructure" announced in 2015. Faculty after faculty will face staff cuts, course cuts and mergers.

The agenda is to maximise profit at the expense of staff, students and quality education.

There are cuts across the board on other Australian campuses as well. In 2016, the Australian National University cut programs from its language school and the University of Western Australia announced 300 job cuts. This year started with 400 staff at the University of NSW facing redundancy. Everywhere there are cuts there needs to be a fight.

The marches, strikes and occupations to save SCA were part of a fight to stop one rotten decision by management, but they were also part of a fight against a rotten system that puts profits before people.

**The university was forced to delay its plan by 12 months and the attempt to sack 60 per cent of staff has been severely dented**

# Unions prepare to resist as return of ABCC speeds up

By James Supple

CONSTRUCTION UNIONS are gearing up for a fight, after the Senate approved changes to speed up the re-introduction of the anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC).

A national day of protest is planned in March. Hundreds of construction workers walked off the job to protest in Adelaide in mid-February. CFMEU National Secretary Dave Noonan told the crowd, "This is the first rally. This is not the last rally."

The main job of the ABCC is to police the industrial laws which criminalise effective union action. Fines will increase to \$34,000 for individual workers and \$170,000 for unions every time they breach the anti-strike laws.

As Malcolm Turnbull has admitted, the ABCC is designed to, "improve productivity and reduce building costs" through reducing "days lost to industrial disputes". In other words, union strength has been costing the bosses too much money.

The government managed to pass the ABCC legislation late last year. But it was forced to delay the introduction of the associated Building Code so that existing Enterprise Bargaining Agreements could continue unchanged until November 2018.

Now the Code will come into effect in September, thanks to Senators Derryn Hinch and Nick Xenophon.

The items banned by the Code show that the legislation is simply an attack on the unions and workers' conditions. Banned clauses include guaranteed days off for Christmas Day and other public holidays, the requirement that sub-contractors pay their workers the same as other workers on the same site, and limits on ordinary working hours that prevent excessive overtime. Also gone are requirements to employ a certain number of apprentices on site.

The Code also targets unions through banning any additional rights to enter workplaces for induction sessions or holding meetings on site, and banning full-time union delegates at workplaces.

From September any company that has signed an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement containing clauses outlawed by the Code will be unable to work on federal government projects.

This is designed to discipline major builders, who stand to lose money if they are excluded from the multi-



**Above: Construction workers rally against the ABCC last time around**

billion dollar government contracts.

Many agreements will be re-negotiated. Outside Victoria, the CFMEU has agreed to clauses in Enterprise Agreements allowing bosses to reopen negotiations to comply with the Code.

The CFMEU is promising to ex-

tract extra wage increases to compensate for any loss in conditions.

Everyone needs to get behind the construction unions' fight. Last time around it was defiance of the ABCC that helped to finish it off. Bad laws deserve to be broken.

**Fines will increase to \$34,000 for individual workers and \$170,000 for unions every time they breach the anti-strike laws**

## Centrelink workers join fight against robo debt

WORKERS AT Centrelink are opposing the scandalous "robo-debt" collection process, despite bullying and the threats of action under their Code of Conduct. Whistleblowers have fed crucial information about the scheme to the media.

Despite the censorship preventing public servants from speaking out, the CPSU has distributed flyers explaining to clients that Centrelink workers oppose the robo-debt. Over 200,000 people have received letters demanding debt repayments under the farcical automated process.

In Melbourne the Australian Unemployed Workers Union organised a march to Liberal Party headquarters where dummy debt notices were defiantly torn up. The CPSU's Rupert Evans addressed the rally, and a small number of members attended.

Around 5000 jobs were cut from Centrelink recently, undermining the ability of staff to provide adequate services. The union has a long-standing campaign to restore staffing levels as well as a three-year campaign for a new enterprise agreement.

In response, the department covering Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support Agency, DHS, have challenged the unions' industrial action in court, saying its focus was the robo-debt scandal rather than enterprise bargaining. This was withdrawn when the union lifted action in return for further bargaining talks.

Centrelink job cuts should be immediately reversed and long-serving casual staff given permanent positions, as demanded by CPSU. The Centrelink debt debacle has been a huge scandal. The government is vulnerable to a public campaign. This should be linked to the CPSU bargaining campaign.

CPSU delegates meetings in other agencies, ATO, Meteorology, ABS and Immigration, have passed motions of solidarity for Centrelink workers. As one Centrelink delegate said: "DHS' s actions have shown that industrial action works. We appreciated the solidarity from our comrades in other agencies. And we continue our fight."

**CPSU Delegates, Melbourne**



# NSW Greens: Left Renewal goes public... but the right is going hard

By Jean Parker

IN JANUARY, *Solidarity* welcomed the declaration of Left Renewal—the newly formed left tendency within The Greens. Since then, Left Renewal has held successful public launches in Sydney and Canberra, to showcase its vision for The Greens and begin a badly-needed discussion.

Over a hundred people packed into the Sydney Left Renewal meeting at Redfern’s Settlement hall to discuss the future of The Greens and the implications of the right-ward shift in the party for social movements and the left more broadly.

One of the speakers, Chris, responded to media attacks from Greens leader Richard di Natale that Left Renewal members should “consider finding a new political home,” telling the meeting that that, “socialist, anarchists and radicals had always been part of the party”.

That view has also been strongly put by other Left Renewal members. Tamara Ryan told *Sydney Criminal Lawyers* that, “We go back to the infamous Green Bans that inspired our party founders, where ecological and social justice were fought for in the streets and on work sites. We want to go back to and strengthen those roots.”

Another speaker, Holly, argued strongly that The Greens need to be anti-capitalist if they are going to capture the radical mood that has seen young people flock to support socialist Democrat Bernie Sanders in the US, and a resurgent left movement backing Jeremy Corbyn in the UK Labour Party.

But, just days after the launch, the right of the party escalated its attack on the left.

Former leader Bob Brown hit a disgraceful new low calling Lee Rhiannon the, “Tony Abbott of The Greens when it comes to political white-anting”. Brown’s brazen attack is astonishing given the white-anting he and another former leader, Christine Milne, happily carry out for Richard Di Natale.

At the same time, behind the scenes the right continues to gain ground. The Greens’ January National Council meeting broke with protocol to hold an “in camera” session and pass a motion against factions—a blatant attempt to intimidate Left Renewal.

Then at the February NSW State Delegates’ Council, despite wide-



**Above: Organising larger Greens contingent at major rallies can be a way of pushing for a more activist party**

spread concern about Dawn Walker breaching party rules and accessing official membership lists to contact Greens members, the left was rolled by a single vote when it moved to overturn her pre-selection win. Walker will now join Jeremy Buckingham and Justin Field as part of the right Greens bloc in the NSW parliament.

The left lost another opportunity at the SDC meeting, when, under pressure from the right for a consensus resolution, the meeting backed away from a motion explicitly condemning Bob Brown’s attack on Lee Rhiannon.

## Resisting the drift right

Left Renewal has come under a lot of pressure for bringing the fight against the rise of the conservatives into the open. But the determined action of the right to consolidate their hold on the party shows why the formation of the faction has been so necessary to defend party democracy.

The new group has its work cut out to reach out to rank-and-file Greens members and supporters, and build a base in the party. There are promising signs that the wider left in the party in NSW is also recognising the significance of the stand taken by Left Renewal to defend the party’s principles.

There are good opportunities in the period ahead. Building a solid

Greens contingent for the Palm Sunday refugee rally can be a good step towards mobilising The Greens as an activist party, and organising Greens members to fight the racist right—be that Turnbull, Hanson, or Trump.

This outward-looking focus allows space to engage wider layers of Greens members in the debate over what sort of party The Greens should be.

The “Standing Up For Communities: No Bans, No Hate” meeting with Lee Rhiannon and Mehreen Faruqi at Granville on Sunday 5 March, is another opportunity to mobilise Greens members and tap the growing concerns about Trump and Turnbull’s racism and Islamophobia.

There are many other opportunities to respond politically to the conservatism of The Greens leadership. In a couple of weeks, 937 people signed a petition initiated by *Solidarity* condemning Di Natale’s characterisation of calls by Aboriginal activists to oppose Australia Day and burn the Australian flag as “violent”.

Similar public responses are needed to Bob Brown’s attacks on Lee Rhiannon, and the National Council’s “anti-faction” resolution. Combined with efforts to mobilise members and supporters, such responses can both expose more clearly what is at stake in the fight against the right, and what a fighting left Greens could look like. The wider Left can only gain from that.

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**The determined action of the right to consolidate their hold shows why the formation of the faction has been so necessary**

# US eyewitness: resistance to Trump spreading

By Clare Fester

CRISIS AFTER crisis has plagued Donald Trump's first month in the White House. He has the lowest approval ratings of any incoming president ever recorded.

According to a CNN poll in February, they are continuing to plummet. In their early days Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan all held ratings in at least the 50s, while Trump's hover in the low 40s. Even George W. Bush, the last president who failed to win the popular vote, was better liked than Trump.

People are quickly building an active resistance. An estimated four million people joined the Women's March protesting Trump's inauguration in January, marking the largest single demonstration in US history. The struggle feels infectious. I live in Los Angeles and it's hard to find a day anymore without an anti-Trump protest somewhere in the city.

Thousands all over the country flocked to airports within hours of Trump announcing his now-infamous executive order banning entry to the US from seven majority Muslim countries. The order also temporarily blocked refugees' entry for three months and Syrian refugees faced an indefinite ban. Trump's message was clear, as one placard read at the protests: "we bomb you, we ban you."

In Los Angeles we held rolling protests blocking international arrivals and departures at LAX airport for hours at a time.

The crowds spontaneously burst into chants like "From LAX to JFK, let them land, let the stay" and "no racism, no fear, immigrants are welcome here." "No ban, no wall, sanctuary for all" was also popular, linking up Trump's wide anti-immigrant agenda. Many people who had never protested before the Women's March rallied at the airports.

Entering and exiting LAX, protesters lined the footpaths and fences with their handmade signs with slogans welcoming Muslims and attacking Trump about anything from his proposed border wall to his rank misogyny, his tax returns, and his far-right cabinet appointments.

In a significant development for the resistance, unions representing textile workers and the service industry in Los Angeles helped call and run the protests.



**Above: Within hours of Trump's executive order, there were protests at international airports**

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**Crowds spontaneously burst into chants like "From LAX to JFK, let them land, let the stay"**

At New York's JFK airport the Taxi Workers' Alliance went on strike, refusing to drive anyone in or out until the ban was lifted. "Our 19,000-member-strong union stands firmly opposed to Donald Trump's Muslim ban," their statement said. "As an organization whose membership is largely Muslim, a workforce that's almost universally immigrant, and a working-class movement that is rooted in the defense of the oppressed, we say no to this inhumane and unconstitutional ban."

They also connected the entry ban to the experience of their own members: "We know all too well that when government programs sanction outright Islamophobia and the rhetoric of hate is spewed from the bully pulpit, hate crimes increase and drivers suffer gravely. Our Sikh and other non-Muslim brown and black members also suffer from anti-Muslim violence."

Building this kind of solidarity between everyone currently facing attacks under Trump will be essential in the coming weeks and months.

## Migrant workers

Also in New York, Yemeni immigrants took action against the Muslim ban by shuttering their delis for the day across the city as a display of the importance of migrant labour.

Yemen is one of the seven countries listed on Trump's ban. Both owners of delis and workers walked out and thousands rallied in Brooklyn, chanting "No Ban, No Wall" and "United We Stand, Against the

Muslim Ban".

On 16 February, migrant workers launched a nationwide action called "Day Without Immigrants" to protest Trump's immigration policies. Many migrants did not turn up for work, meaning businesses like fast-food restaurants around the country had to be closed down. Some business owners also shut down in solidarity.

Federal judges all over the country issued temporary injunctions against the travel ban. At first Trump ignored them, but he has since been forced to back down.

We should be very clear about this victory: there would be no injunctions if it weren't for the mass resistance of ordinary people. The protests re-opened the borders. The protests will have to escalate with Trump expected to issue a new executive order as *Solidarity* went to press.

In some places establishment Democrats have joined the protests. Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti came to LAX. Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts congresswoman and a popular candidate among progressives for the next elections, spoke out at the airport protests near Boston.

But these shows of support ring hollow to many of us. Obama's no-fly list helped inspire Trump's travel ban. Protesters know that Obama deported more undocumented people than any other US president in history. We must build organisations and coalitions independent of the Democrats to defeat Trump's racist and anti-immigrant agenda.

By James Supple

TRUMP'S FIRST days in power produced a sweeping series of executive orders. Most dramatic was his ban on people from seven Muslim majority countries entering the US.

Many hoped that the arrogant and bigoted style of Trump's election campaign might fade when he became President. But the Trump on display during his campaign was not just an act—he has a history of racist and sexist outbursts dating back decades.

In his inauguration speech Trump declared that “the hour of action” had arrived. His flurry of presidential orders was intended to present him as a decisive leader able to deliver dramatic change.

Trump stands for an extreme “America first” nationalism. His effort to close the borders to refugees, Muslims and immigrants goes along with an attack on foreign countries and foreign workers for taking American jobs.

Trump's open and explicit racism goes further than the coded appeals to bigotry more common among mainstream political leaders. His politics are the equivalent of a far right leader like Pauline Hanson.

But the continuities between the Obama administration and Trump are greater than often appreciated. Obama deported more than 2.4 million immigrants, while Trump has expanded the number of immigrants able to be deported. Obama created an apparatus for carrying out deportations that Trump will build on.

After 9/11 the Bush administration created a registry requiring males from 25 designated countries, all but one of them Muslim or Arab majority countries, to sit special immigration interviews when entering or leaving the US. It registered and tracked over 80,000 people. The Obama administration maintained it until immigration officials decided it was unnecessary due to new technology in 2011. Obama only attempted to shut it down permanently one month before leaving office.

Trump has built upon the racism generated by the presidencies of Obama and George W Bush through 15 years of war in the Middle East and scaremongering about terrorism.

### Ruling for the rich

Trump also shares the aims of the rich and powerful of boosting corporate profits, as part of the 1 per cent himself. The stockmarkets soared following his election, as big business recognised that his policies could

# Trump's racist shock and awe builds on Obama legacy



**Above: Trump has issued a succession of horrifying executive orders**

work for them.

Despite his populist rhetoric about “draining the swamp” of vested interests controlling politics, he has stacked his administration with bankers from Goldman Sachs, the very firm he attacked during his campaign as having “total control” over Hillary Clinton.

Gary Cohn, who resigned as number two at the bank to head his National Economic Council, revealed that Trump is preparing to unwind controls on the banks imposed after the 2008 financial crisis.

Like the Republican Congress, Trump supports massive tax cuts for the super-rich—classic neo-liberal trickle-down economics. The top 1 per cent would get 47 per cent of the benefit of his proposed tax cuts in their first year, taking back on average over \$200,000 each. He also plans to slash corporate tax from 35 to just 15 per cent. All this, along with plans for cuts to government programs like Obamacare, will hurt working class people's living standards.

However Trump's support for protectionism and his views on foreign policy are regarded with unease by the political establishment and the ruling class. Trump has threatened to impose a 35 per cent “border tax” on Mexico to keep manufacturing in the US, withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and promised to re-negotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Key adviser Steve Bannon sees protectionism and infrastructure projects to deliver jobs as key to creating

what he calls an “economic nationalist movement”.

But Trump's \$1 trillion plan to rebuild the country's broken down infrastructure rests largely on tax breaks for corporations and privatisation, rather than government spending to create jobs.

How far Trump will push for protectionist policies against countries like Mexico and China is unclear. But promising to deport millions of immigrants and scapegoating foreign workers for job losses is a way of directing the anger and bitterness in the US in a racist direction.

Trump's election is due to a crisis of legitimacy of the political system. Hillary Clinton was simply unable to motivate voters in the key states of the Midwest to turn out to vote in anything like the same numbers even as Obama four years before. For working class people whose lives have gotten worse through the economic crisis, she offered anything but change. Trump's populist attacks on the Washington elite combined with racism allowed him to win just enough votes to scrape into power.

His popularity for an incoming President is a record low, and will drop further as he fails to deliver the jobs or the end to corporate domination he promised.

As millions across the US take to the streets against Trump, the opening for a socialist alternative linking opposition to racism with demands to make the bankers and the corporations pay for jobs and services is clear.

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**Trump has built upon the racism generated by 15 years of war in the Middle East**



By Lachlan Marshall

A NEW UN report reveals the shocking persecution faced by the Rohingya Muslim minority in Burma.

The abuses documented show a scorched earth policy of ethnic cleansing in the western Rakhine state aimed at forcing the Rohingya population across the border into Bangladesh.

The situation for Rohingya has deteriorated since October last year after Rohingya insurgents killed nine Burmese border guards. Since then an estimated 60,000 Rohingya have fled across the border, adding to the tens of thousands already stuck in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

In “area clearance operations” the army and allied militias have killed over 1000 Rohingya, including babies whose throats were slit in front of their mothers.

The report describes widespread rape of women and the torching of entire Rohingya villages, with authorities locking residents inside houses before burning them to death.

One Rohingya eyewitness told the investigators, “The army set fire to my house, burning my elderly mother-in-law and a sister-in-law, who was mentally disabled, alive.”

Mosques and homes belonging to Muslims were burned, while those belonging to Buddhist neighbours were spared. The army is undermining the Muslim community’s ability to continue living in Rakhine state. The operations have targeted food supplies, destroying crops and killing livestock.

Aung San Suu Kyi, recently elected leader of Burma and Nobel Peace Prize winner, has disgracefully refused to condemn the persecution or even acknowledge the Rohingya’s existence. She is desperate to avoid antagonising the still influential military and fears an electoral backlash in the Buddhist-majority nation.

Suu Kyi’s State Counsellor Office issued a press release refuting what it called “rumours” of “fake rape.”

The government has referred the allegations to a commission headed by a retired general which is likely to be a whitewash. According to UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee, “the government’s response to all of these problems seems to currently be to defend, dismiss and deny.”

The Burmese government refuses to recognise Rohingya as citizens and calls them Bengalis or “illegal immigrants,” despite Rohingya having lived there for generations.

Their freedom of movement is

## New evidence of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya



Above: Rohingya children at a makeshift refugee camp inside Bangladesh

severely restricted due to curfews and they require certificates to move between villages. Since 2012 increased attacks have displaced 140,000 people.

### Australian complicity

In the face of international outcry, Julie Bishop has expressed concern about the Rohingya’s treatment. But this is coming very late in the game.

In May 2015 close to 90,000 Rohingya fled by boat for Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Their boats were turned back and stuck at sea, starving and dehydrated, for months. Many died.

Then Prime Minister Tony Abbott led by example in turning back boats and when asked if he would assist the Rohingya stranded at sea replied, “nope, nope, nope.”

Australia has still resettled only 37 Rohingya refugees since 2013. This could only be seen in Burma as a signal that Australia would turn a blind eye to the ethnic cleansing.

## Mass movement in South Korea radicalises

SOME 750,000 people took to the streets of Seoul, the capital of South Korea, in mid-February to demand the immediate resignation of the President Park Geun-hye. The size of the protest almost doubled compared to one the previous week.

Park was suspended as president after a vote in parliament to impeach her last December. It followed revelations of her corruption.

But this has to be ratified by South Korea’s Constitutional Court before a new presidential election can be held.

Park’s supporters are calling for a protest on 1 March. Parts of the right-wing press exaggerate the size of protests held by Park’s supporters, and suggest it is as big as the mass movement against her.

All this meant that people were even more determined to take part in Saturday’s protest in Seoul.

The special prosecutor investigating Park’s crime has once again requested an arrest warrant for Samsung owner Lee Jae-yong. Samsung is accused of bribing Park.

The opposition parties recently made a treacherous agreement with the ruling party. They announced they would accept the ruling of the Constitutional Court, even if it is to overturn the impeachment and

reinstate the president.

“Moderate” forces in the movement say the most important thing is to support the opposition parties. They are also worried by the political polarisation.

They even tried to overturn decisions made by Popular Action, the umbrella organisation leading the movement, about who should host the main platform of speakers.

They wanted to replace an activist from the revolutionary socialist organisation Workers’ Solidarity with another activist.

But many protesters have openly criticised the opposition parties for being preoccupied with the presidential election. This will only take place at least eight weeks after Park’s impeachment is ratified.

The opposition parties’ agreement to unconditionally accept the court’s ruling faces criticism from the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions and others within the movement.

More than ever, it is necessary to strengthen the movement and not wait for an election in the future.

The radical left are fighting to encourage the participation of organised workers. This is the most effective way for the movement to beat off Park Geun-hye’s attempt to fight back.

**Workers’ Solidarity, South Korea**

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**Suu Kyi’s State Counsellor Office issued a press release refuting what it called “rumours” of “fake rape”**

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIALISM?

Sophie Joo explains what's wrong with capitalism and why we need a socialist alternative

The need for radical change couldn't be more urgent. Donald Trump's terrifying presidency means a racist bigot billionaire is at the helm of the world's most powerful country. But Trump is just the latest symptom of capitalism, a failing system.

Around the world, the divide between the rich and poor grows. In January, Oxfam reported that the world's eight richest men owned the same amount of wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion people on the planet.

Climate change already drastically affects the world's ecosystem but corporations and states make only a pretence of acting to stop it. The 2015 Paris Climate Summit was a sham. Its already low targets are voluntary, non-binding and have no penalties attached for failing to reach them.

Wars continue to rage across the globe. Under the Nobel Peace Prize winning Obama, even more countries were bombed than when George W Bush was president. In 2016, the US dropped three bombs per hour. Trump is now escalating tensions with China.

Racist, sexist and homophobic oppression continues to inflict brutal suffering. In Australia, despite Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, the number of indigenous children torn from their homes and families is higher than during the period of the Stolen Generations. Under Obama—America's first black president—racial discrimination and police brutality was so bad it provoked the Black Lives Matter movement.

Right-wing populism is being used to scapegoat migrants and refugees all over the world. Here, Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten's anti-refugee policies have fed the re-emergence of racist far-right politician Pauline Hanson.

## Revolutionary change

The need for an alternative is clear. However, parliament is not going to bring real change. Under capitalism, democracy is reduced to numbering a set of boxes inside a ballot box once every few years and even then, the governments that get elected almost never live up to their promises.

Most "democratic" states around the world only offer people a choice between two main parties, both well

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**The wealth currently controlled by a small elite, the top 1 per cent, would be put under popular control**

seated in the pockets of the ruling class. The alternative to Trump was Clinton; a war monger and the candidate of Wall St.

In Australia, we have a choice between Turnbull and Shorten. Turnbull is the open candidate of big business, blatantly supporting anti-worker attacks like the ABCC. But neither of them wants to tax the rich to reduce inequality and both support locking up refugees in offshore gulags.

The reason for this is that those who hold most of the power in our society never face election.

Inside the state, we have a completely unelected judiciary, unelected law enforcement and military bodies. The top state officials controlling these institutions are paid a fortune to ensure they are loyal to capitalism. Australia's Chief of Army, Angus Campbell, earns \$548,360 per year.

But the real power belongs to the unelected corporate bosses and investors who control the bulk of the world's wealth. This elite minority make decisions about what will be produced, where, when and how. These decisions are based on profit, not human need. When politicians talk about the need to cut corporate tax to "encourage investment", they show their commitment to running the system for these capitalists.

And the control of the media by the likes of billionaire tycoon, Rupert Murdoch, puts enormous influence over information and public debate in the hands of the rich.

Any radical politician that tries to change the system by getting elected will come up against the reality that the capitalist ruling class retains the power to crush any government refusing to serve its interests.

## Socialism

Socialism, in contrast, would mean a radical extension in democracy in a form that is unrecognisable when compared to what exists today.

Democratic control and decision making by ordinary people would exist in all spheres of society. The wealth currently controlled by a small elite, the top 1 per cent, would be put under popular control. Capitalism concentrates workers together on a mass scale, organising production co-operatively. Without their labour capitalism ceases to function. This is the basis of workers' power.

During the high points of workers' struggle, the possibility of socialism

has been posed again and again, such as in Spain in 1936, Hungary in 1956, France in 1968 or Chile in 1973.

The 1917 Russian Revolution is the only example to date where, for a short period, workers managed to hold power. It exemplified what a genuine democracy could look like.

Workers seized the means of production—the factories, mines, offices and trains normally controlled by the rich. This enabled them to organise society for the benefit of all, not just the elite.

Soviets, meaning workers' councils, were established through a system of elected delegates at a workplace, regional and national level. These delegates were fundamentally different to the politicians we have today. They were totally accountable to the people. A mass meeting could be convened to recall and replace them at any time and they were paid only the salary of an average worker.

Following 1917 however, socialist revolution failed to spread across Europe, thereby isolating Russia. This led to the rise of Stalin's dictatorship and the destruction of workers' democracy. Nevertheless, we can still apply the lessons of 1917 today. The socialist way of running society is the only way to ensure the true needs of the people are met.

In a socialist world, there would be no need for wars. Today, military conflict is driven by the ruling elite who only aim to broaden their power and wealth. With this competitive drive eliminated, resources could be invested in food, education and housing for all.

Work would take on a completely different meaning. Rather than being a site of exploitation, workplaces would be under the democratic control of workers and run for the benefit of the workforce and society as a whole.

Throughout history and still today, racism and sexism are propagated by the ruling class to keep workers divided. Under socialism, where there is no need for competition or exploitation, these would disappear.

Ultimately, without class divisions, we would be living in a truly equal society without oppression.

In the wake of Trump's election, and in the centenary year of the Russian Revolution, it is time to build for an alternative to the current system. Solidarity is a revolutionary socialist organisation committed to this struggle and we encourage you to join us.

# THE FEBRUARY 1917 REVOLUTION: HOW RUSSIAN WORKERS TOPPLED A DICTATOR

Russia's year of revolution began in February with an uprising that brought down the Tsarist regime, writes **Feiyi Zhang** on the 100th anniversary

RUSSIA IN 1917 produced the most thoroughly democratic society seen in human history to date, moving towards a socialist society based on real human liberation.

The revolution was a genuine “festival of the oppressed” that put down-trodden peasants and workers suffering appalling conditions in control of a major country for the first time.

Women won the right to divorce and abortion on demand as well as the vote. Russia became the first country in the world to decriminalise homosexuality, decades before the rest of the world.

Conservative historians and the mainstream media often present the revolution as manipulated from above by a handful of leaders.

But Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders the revolution, argued that, “The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny.”

Russia went through two revolutions in 1917, in February and October. The February Revolution saw millions of workers and peasants overthrow the 300 year old tyranny of the Romanov monarchy. It opened the flood-gates for a revolutionary process of workers discovering their own power. By the end of October Russia's workers and peasants stood over society and ruled it.

For these reasons the Russian Revolution needs to be celebrated and learnt from as the highest expression of the creative potential of workers to organise society from below.

## Women spark the revolution

No one thought that when female textile workers called a strike against bread rationing on International Women's Day, February 23, that this would mark the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

The horror of the First World War and declining living standards underpinned an explosion of workers struggle.

Despite the opposition of the established revolutionary parties, female workers in the radical Vyborg district of Petrograd (now St Petersburg) went out on strike. They sent an appeal for support to other factories. At least 90,000 workers joined them to strike that day.

The following day, rather than subsiding, the strike spread. Half of the industrial workers of Petrograd went on strike. Workers met to discuss how to spread the movement.

Enormous crowds poured through the capital city, Petrograd, surging towards the city centre. The slogan of “bread” was crowded out with the slogans of “down with autocracy” and “down with war”.

The government sent out police and soldiers against the crowds. But the workers fraternised with the soldiers and urged them to support their demands.

On the second day of the strike, the workers scored their first victory as Cossack soldiers, lined up to prevent them getting any further, allowed workers to crawl underneath their horses' bellies to break the cordon and reach the city centre.

On the fourth day of the protests, some troops were ordered to shoot down the striking workers. When other soldiers heard this, they rushed out to try to stop them. As the mutiny spread and more and more groups of soldiers sided with the workers, the Tsarist monarchy was dealt a death blow by revolt in their own army. After just five days the movement had won, with the Tsar forced to abdicate.

## Crisis and First World War

Russian Revolutionary Vladimir Lenin argued, “It is only when the

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### When the Tsar fell, the workers' soviets held effective power

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‘lower classes’ do not want to live in the old way and the ‘upper classes’ cannot carry on in the old way that the revolution can triumph”.

The central burning issue sparking the revolt in February was the worsening horror of the First World War.

As one of the great powers at the time, Russia was drawn into the war.

But it was still a largely peasant based economy with an army badly equipped to fight a modern war.

The majority of the population had originally been overtaken with the wave of nationalism at the beginning of the war in 1914.

Yet this had disintegrated just a year later, as millions of Russian peasants and workers were dragged into a brutal slaughterhouse.

By 1917 the suffering of soldiers had reached its limit. Of the 15.5 million men who had been called up, it is estimated that 7.2 to 8.5 million were killed, wounded, or were missing.

Soldiers reached the point of lynching unpopular officers and deserting en masse from the front.

The Internal Security Administration reported in October 1916, “Everyone who comes near the army must carry away a complete and convincing impression of the utter moral disintegration of the troops”.

The war also created a terminal crisis in the Russian economy. The whole economy was subordinated to feeding the war, consuming as much as 50 per cent of production.

Industrialists grew less and less willing to grant anything to workers and the government answered every protest and strike with repression.

## The soviets

In the process of overthrowing the monarchy, workers organised into what they called soviets.

This was a form of democracy unimaginable under normal periods of



capitalism.

Each 1000 workers and each company of soldiers elected their own representative.

Delegates could be immediately recalled and replaced if their constituency disagreed with any of their decisions.

Rather than being forced to work under the order of bosses, workers used their collective power to organise society themselves.

Workers first formed soviets out of the mass strikes during the failed revolution in 1905 in Russia. They re-emerged in February 1917 as a way to organise and co-ordinate the strike movement.

But in the process of this activity, the soviets began to take control over running the economy and controlling production in the factories.

Trotsky wrote in his famous *History of the Russian Revolution* that, “From the moment of its formation, the soviet, in the person of its Executive Committee, begins to function as a sovereign. It elects a temporary food commission and places it in charge of the mutineers and the garrison in general...”

“In order to remove financial resources from the hands of the officials of the old power, the soviet decides to occupy the state bank, the treasury, the mint and the printing office with a revolutionary guard.”

When the Tsar fell, the workers’ soviets held effective power. One moderate politician wrote:

“the soviet seized all the post and telegraph bureaus, the wireless, all the Petrograd railway stations, all the printing establishments, so that without its permission it was impossible to send a telegram, to leave Petrograd, or to the print an appeal.”

In the space of a few days there was no town in Russia that did not have a soviet.

### Dual power

An unstable situation came out of the February Revolution. Workers had overthrown the monarchy and controlled production in many places, challenging the control of the factory owners.

But most workers still thought that a parliamentary democracy was the most they could achieve. This often occurs in revolutions. Workers’ actions, which saw them in effective control of society through the soviets, ran ahead of their ideas about what was possible.

The soviets in fact handed politi-



**Above: The revolution in February was begun by women textile workers**

cal power back to a “provisional government” made up of capitalists who promised to establish a parliamentary system.

Workers still overwhelmingly looked to the more moderate of the workers’ parties, the Mensheviks, instead of the revolutionary Bolshevik Party.

The Menshevik leader in the soviet, Tsereteli, declared that, “a compromise with the bourgeoisie” was necessary.

He argued that, “There can be no other road for the revolution. It’s true that we have all the power, and that the government would go if we lifted a finger, but that would mean disaster for the revolution.”

However the revolution was not over. Alongside the provisional government, the soviets still held power in workplaces.

All of the problems which had led to the revolution in the first place were to continue through 1917 as the government refused to end the war and the economic crisis grew.

But now workers had a sense of their immense power and increasingly flocked to the soviets with all their grievances as they saw them as representing their interests.

### The role of the Bolsheviks

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky wrote that, “No one, positively no one—we can assert this categorically upon the basis of all data—then thought

that February 23 was to mark the beginning of a decisive drive against absolutism”.

However, years of agitation and revolutionary work by the Bolsheviks did have an influence.

Whilst the February Revolution was not sparked or directed by any party or organisation, it was led by workers in the radical Vyborg district who carried the lessons of past struggles.

They were able to lead, to argue, to interpret events and to convince others.

This included their experience of the failed revolution of 1905. Trotsky argued that the key leaders in February were, “conscious and tempered workers educated for the most part by the party of Lenin”—the Bolsheviks.

The inherently unstable situation of dual power resulted in a socialist revolution in October 1917 when workers under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party overthrew the provisional government to deliver all power to the soviets.

Without Bolshevik leadership the socialist revolution in October would not have been possible.

As Trump provokes a new wave of radical movements across the globe in response to his racism and military madness, the need for organisation and revolutionary socialist politics is just as relevant a century later.

# UNITY AGAINST RACISM

## US COMMUNISTS AND THE BLACK STRUGGLE IN THE 1930S

The American Communist Party showed how it is possible to win white workers to the fight against racist oppression, argues **Adam Adelpour**

THE TRUMP Presidency has opened an era where an openly racist bigot is the head of state in the world's most powerful nation. The US has a deep legacy of racism through its history of slavery and segregation. But this history also holds important lessons about how to defeat racism.

The US Communist Party's (CPUSA) anti-racist work in the Great Depression is one of the most important examples.

The CPUSA's involvement in the Scottsboro Boys' campaign in the 1930s and the Pittsburgh miners' strike in 1931 are both classic examples of anti-racist struggle that warrant close examination. By fusing together anti-racist and economic class struggles the CPUSA was able to build an incredibly forceful vehicle for anti-racism.

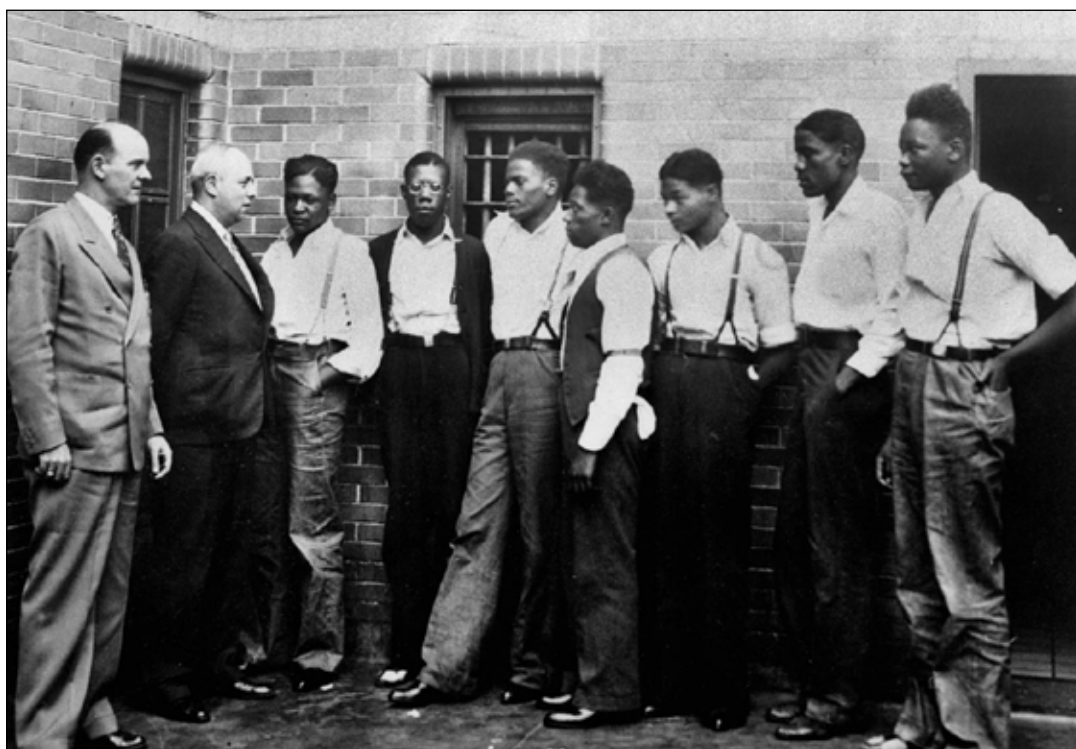
Their anti-racist work was ultimately undermined by their support for the policies dictated by Stalin's Russia. But what shone in that work remains of use to us today.

Many commentators and activists attributed Trump's victory to a "whitelash". According to this view white voters elected a racist because they feared racial progress as a threat to the benefits that racism supposedly affords whites.

One prominent example is Britanny Packnett, one of *Time magazine's* "12 New Faces of Black Leadership" in 2015. She responded to Trump's election win by saying, "White people handed us Donald Trump" and "... at the end of the day, 10 out of 10 white people benefit from white supremacy."

This brand of anti-racism shares some common assumptions that are important to unpack. If it is accepted that all white people enjoy some benefit from racist oppression it follows that they have a stake in maintaining it.

Such a view forecloses the possibility of fighting racism on a united working class basis. It leads to a focus



**Above: Seven of the Scottsboro boys, the focus of a campaign against their racist false conviction, with their lawyer**

on black-only organising (often called "autonomous organising"), and an easy slide into the idea that all blacks have a common interest, whether they are millionaires and powerful political figures or people living in poverty. It can also lead to an inward looking focus on interpersonal anti-racism and retreat into "safe spaces", since racism seems so insurmountable.

By contrast the history of the CPUSA in the 1930s shows how racism amongst white workers can be fought. It vindicates the Marxist view that racism, despite its real material effects, is a form of false consciousness pushed from above by the ruling class.

Racism is a tactic to divide in order to rule and incorporate in order to exploit. As such, struggles to economically advance the whole working class and struggles against

racist oppression mutually strengthen each other. Racism must be confronted through radical tactics, unity and revolutionary class politics.

### Context

The CPUSA was formed as a result of the Russian Revolution in 1917. The Socialist Party split, with the left majority of the party declaring its support for Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

From an anti-racist perspective this was highly significant. The Bolsheviks were defined by their support for national liberation struggles, movements for self-determination and the struggles of the oppressed.

This contrasted sharply with the right-wing of the US Socialist party who didn't support anti-colonial movements at all. From 1917 the Bolsheviks had granted self-determination to oppressed nationalities and rights to

minorities. Jews who were routinely killed in pogroms under the Tsar were found in prominent positions in the Soviet government; the most well-known being Leon Trotsky, one of the key leaders of the revolution.

An important but small section of black radicals in the US saw what the Bolsheviks had done in Russia and drew the conclusion that revolutionary working class politics was the only way to end racism.

They joined the US Communist Party and provided its first nucleus of leading black members in the 1920s—people like Cyril Briggs, James Ford and Harry Haywood.

The early CPUSA had to fight racism even within its own ranks. For example, when Harry Haywood decided to join the Communist Party in 1922, his brother urged him to temporarily join another all black revolutionary organisation called the African Blood Brotherhood instead. He said that the Southside CPUSA branch was too racist.

Such stories were typical. In this period the actual anti-racist work of the CPUSA was farmed out to a particular department rather than being seen as the duty of every member. This ensured racism festered.

### **The Comintern**

The push that shifted the CPUSA decisively towards black struggle came from the Communist International, or Comintern.

The Comintern was set up by the Bolsheviks in 1919 to encourage the spread of revolutionary socialist politics. It had immense influence on the Communist Parties around the world like the CPUSA.

In 1928 the Comintern effectively decreed that the CPUSA should call for a separate black state in the US South and racial equality and integration in the North. Black members initially found this ludicrous as no one within the black population in the US was calling for this.

This “Black Belt theory”, as it was known, was deeply confused. However, by putting black struggle in terms of national liberation it also hammered home the centrality of anti-racist struggle to the socialist revolution.

National liberation had been central to the victory of the Russian Revolution. Under the rubric of the “Black Belt theory” the liberation of black people would be no less central to revolution in the US. This made it much harder for the CPUSA to treat

black struggle as a side issue.

### **The Scottsboro boys**

Shortly after this the Communist Party launched its most famous anti-racist initiative—the campaign to free the Scottsboro boys. The campaign began in 1931 and aimed to free nine young black men falsely accused of raping two white women and sentenced to death in an Alabama court. The arrest and sentencing was a racist police frame-up of a type common at the time. One of the alleged victims actually admitted in a retrial that the incident never took place.

As a result of repeated appeals a single black person was included in the jury and eventually charges against four of the boys were dropped. The others received prison time, but escaped death sentences. All of them were eventually pardoned; the last three pardons were as recent as 2013.

The Communist Party’s involvement in the case saw them openly contending for a position in the leadership of black struggles in the US. The leading black rights organisation at the time was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It aimed to stop lynchings, gain voting rights and end segregation. However, it was based on the black middle class, employed legal methods rather than mass mobilisation and stayed away from militant tactics.

When the Scottsboro boys’ trial began the NAACP wanted nothing to do with the case. They ignored it because the accused boys were poor and working class. The NAACP felt that associating themselves with such riff-raff in a controversial case would only serve to tarnish their middle class respectability.

The Communist Party was able to win widespread black sympathy through its campaign of street marches in major cities, rallies in the segregated South and a strident demand for the boys’ immediate release. The NAACP quickly felt its preeminence was threatened and wanted in. They tried to gain control of the campaign, arguing that, “Communist involvement in the case would only hamper the proper conduct of the defense.” They also claimed that demonstrations antagonised Alabama public opinion, as did the demand for the boys’ immediate release. In contrast the CPUSA said they would “give the boys the best possible legal defence in the capitalist courts, but at the same

## **The CPUSA led years of struggle which stopped the executions and saw most of the Scottsboro boys eventually freed**

time to emphasise... that the boys can only be saved by the pressure of millions of workers, coloured and white, behind the defense in the courts.”

The fact that the Communist Party was the only racially integrated political organisation in the US was an important strength. They had an almost unique ability to mobilise working class whites for black issues. However, this was initially used against them by political opponents.

When the CPUSA called the first Scottsboro marches in Harlem in 1931 mainly white workers turned up. This accurately reflected their membership at the time. The black papers called it a “white invasion” and denounced blacks that joined as “cannon fodder for a white party”. However, in the end the approach of integrated organisation, radicalism and working class unity was vindicated. It made it harder for police to isolate black protesters, made mobilisations broader and the community support for the campaign stronger. Soon thousands of black workers on the Harlem Scottsboro marches outnumbered white workers ten to one.

Confronted with such a tide of support for the Communist-led campaign, the NAACP was never able to gain control. The CPUSA led years of militant struggle which stopped the executions and saw most of the boys eventually freed. Over the period of the campaign the black membership of the party exploded from 1000 in 1930 to 5000 in 1939.

### **Class war in the mines**

Another valuable example of the CPUSA’s anti-racist organising in the period is the Pittsburgh Miners’ Strike in 1931. It vividly demonstrated how the CPUSA successfully fought for unity amongst workers divided by racism. They did this by fusing together anti-racist and working class politics.

In the lead up to 1931 the major miners’ union had been smashed after a year-long strike. The conditions for miners were deteriorating rapidly and the Communist Party affiliated miners’ union had stepped into the wreckage. They lead a strike of 42,000 miners in the Pittsburgh area to re-establish basic pay and conditions.

The miners’ slogans at the time testify to the dire situation; one such slogan was, “As Well to Starve while Fighting as to Starve Working”.

Six thousand of the miners were black. In some areas blacks had come up from the South many years earlier, were well established and tended



## FEATURES

to hold the leading positions in the unions. Unlike the recent European migrants who did a lot of the mining work, these black workers could speak English. In such areas blacks were leading the strike. But in other areas, like in Pricedale, black workers had been brought in as strike breakers just five years earlier and were uniformly refusing to come out on strike.

Harry Haywood was sent to help organise in Pricedale. As a black Communist his unenviable task was to lead a strike of white miners who faced a large minority of scabs who were exclusively black. It was a racially charged situation.

A big part of why the black workers weren't coming out was racism. The company housing for miners was segregated, and there had been racist incidents in the previous strike. Haywood described the rank-and-file leader of the miners in this area, Cutt Grant, as afflicted with "the white chauvinist illness".

Haywood recounts a telling experience at a rally of the strikers. Cutt Grant was chairing the rally and introduced the white speakers enthusiastically. But his tone changed when it came time to introduce Haywood. Grant made a show of introducing him with extreme reluctance, as if to apologise to the racists in the crowd for the speaker being black. Racist white miners referred to Haywood as the "party nigger".

But this entrenched racism was fought, not passively accepted. Haywood managed to convince Cutt Grant the only way out of the impasse was to have a big meeting about the Scottsboro Boys. Thousands came out to hear the famous black orator Richard B. Moore speak. Large numbers of black workers turned up after previously shunning union events in Pricedale.

Haywood recounts the profound effect the meeting had on Grant. Moore's speech hammered home the links between the Scottsboro Boys' case and the miners' strike and illuminated the way racism works to divide and rule.

According to Haywood, after seeing black and white workers united in their loud applause for the speech, Cutt Grant approached Haywood and poured his heart out about how impressed he was. Purged of his racism he joined the CPUSA the next day—the same day that the black workers joined the strike. Although the strike was eventually defeated it was a tremendous example of how unity could



**Above: A demonstration in support of the Scottsboro boys**

be forged and racism fought in the most difficult circumstances.

Similar stories played out in factories, mines and department stores across the country. In this period everywhere there was division, racism and segregated unions, the Communist Party led serious anti-racist struggle. A decade later black membership in the unions had increased five times over.

### Conclusion

The work of the CPUSA in the early 1930s demonstrated the strength radical class politics could offer in the fight against racism. The CPUSA went from the margins of black life to leading the defining anti-racist campaign of the era over the Scottsboro boys. Likewise, its battle against racism in the unions showed the power of unity in action and dealt a serious blow to the pervasive racism in the US workers' movement.

But the ability of the CPUSA to realise this potential was undone by its Stalinist politics. From the mid-1930s the CPUSA followed the "popular front" policies imposed on the Communist parties around the world by Stalinist Russia, and embraced people like President Franklin D. Roosevelt as allies.

This meant watering down their anti-racism—they even opposed a march on Washington against segregation to curry favour with the Democrats. This fitted with Stalin's project of building alliances with capitalist

governments against Germany.

In 1939 the CPUSA lurched the other way and had to explain why they were supporting the Hitler-Stalin pact. Predictably, when Germany invaded Russia the CPUSA became cheerleaders for Roosevelt again and even supported the internment of Americans of Japanese descent during the war.

The rapid degeneration of the CPUSA's anti-racist work was a tragedy. Had a consistently revolutionary organisation on the scale of the CPUSA existed come the upsurge of struggle in the late 1960s and 1970s it could have had an extraordinary impact.

But the potential that was on display in the early 1930s should still inspire us today. Radical class politics and systematic party organisation were indispensable anti-racist tools on the streets of Alabama and in the mines of Pittsburg.

It will require nothing less to confront the bigotry of a Trump Presidency or the kind of racist, state sanctioned torture we saw in Australia's Don Dale juvenile prison. Then, as now, racism can be beaten.

### Further reading

*Communists in Harlem During the Great Depression* by Mark Naison (2004)

*Black Liberation and Socialism* by Ahmed Shawki (2006)

*Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* by Harry Haywood (1978)

# Moonlight, a black gay film in hiding from itself

**Moonlight**  
Directed by Barry Jenkins  
In selected cinemas now

IF THE other Oscar favourite *La La Land* takes Best Picture over *Moonlight*, it will be a robbery. There is no question that *Moonlight* has much more to offer than a backward-looking Hollywood fairytale.

But for all the accolades and praise it has received so far, there really isn't that much to *Moonlight*. One *Guardian* review proclaims "*Moonlight* portrays black gay life in its joy, sadness and complexity". It's hard to agree.

That's not to say it's a bad film—it's beautifully shot and the acting is superb (particularly Trevante Rhodes as the grown up Chiron).

However, if you were hoping for a film that might give you a sense of what it's like to grow up black, gay, and poor in the US, this isn't it. That story primarily happens off screen. And that's a shame, given that there are almost no other films about black gay men, and there are currently no black gay couples on US television.

Chiron grows up in Miami, Florida, with an absent father and a drug-addled mother (Naomie Harris). A chance encounter with drug dealer Juan (Mahershala Ali of *House of Cards*) and his partner Therese (musician Janelle Monáe) gives him his only semi-stable relationships and an early, positive affirmation of his sexuality. This is a welcome upset to the racist stereotype that black people are more homophobic than others.

But the film just leaves us with the moral quandary of the father-figure drug



**Above: Ashton Sanders as the teenage Chiron**

dealer rather than explore it. There's no sense of why the drug trade might be so pervasive in small urban black communities with so little opportunity for employment (and in a place like Miami, where a white family has an average of 30 times more wealth than a black family).

*Moonlight* has a thin plot. It is more a stringing together of largely silent, artistic scenes of some important moments in Chiron's life. And yet it evades many things that seem key—his mother calling him a "faggot" at a young age is only alluded to, as is the death of another character. This extends so far that his encounters with the underfunded and dysfunctional school system, the racist police, juvenile prison, and the drug trade, are just not explored at all.

## Racism

There is no feeling for the structural racism that holds black Americans back—and why that makes being gay just that much harder for people like Chiron.

According to the *Miami Times*, police shot and killed 71 people in

Florida in 2015, 32 of whom were black. Last year, police shot black man Charles Kinsey, a behavioural therapist, as he sat unarmed on the road trying to calm a patient. The policeman that shot him is still working and hasn't been charged.

To be a young black man in Florida is to live in fear of trigger-happy police, and even more so for those in proximity to the drug trade.

Minor drug offences are part of the explosion in US prisoner numbers. The rate of black imprisonment increased 700 per cent between 1970 and 2005. One in eight black men go to jail in the United States, and black men are more likely to go to jail than graduate college. Black men receive longer sentences than whites convicted for the same crimes, and are less likely to be employed when they are released from prison.

**His encounters with the underfunded school system, the racist police, juvenile prison, and the drug trade, are not explored at all**

Understanding that is part of understanding why Chiron's options are so limited, but the film doesn't even gesture towards such realities. *Moonlight* is a low budget film, but it's not really forgivable to try to represent

a life amidst this oppression without mentioning any of it.

The film's main message seems to be that expectations of macho masculinity create a repressive atmosphere that can prevent men exploring their emotions and their sexuality.

Chiron's extreme inability to come to terms with his sexuality is all too believable, and it's a good story to be told after the arrival of equal marriage might have convinced people that being LGBTI is an easy road. Same sex sexual activity was illegal in Florida until 2003, and a ban on same-sex adoption was only repealed in 2015.

However even the question of sexuality is only explicitly mentioned once or twice. For a gay film, it's not very gay. You almost get the impression that Chiron—and his love interest Kevin—are the only gay people in Miami. Reviewer Guy Lodge suggests that such sexlessness and ambiguity is part of keeping the story unthreatening.

There has long been a recognition of the connection between the struggle for black rights and liberation and gay liberation. Many of the main protagonists in the Stonewall uprising had marched in the civil rights movement. Their struggle convinced Huey Newton, leader of the Black Panthers, to say in 1970, "homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. They might be the most oppressed people in the society."

A little more of Newton's rage against oppression could have made this film a classic. The definitive story of black gay life and struggle remains to be told.

**Amy Thomas**

# BRING THE REFUGEES HERE

By Ian Rintoul

TRUMP'S RACIST ban on Muslims and refugees has already reached deep into Australian politics.

Turnbull's craven support for Trump has been sickening. He joins The Philippines' President Duterte and Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad as the only world leaders who have supported Trump's ban. Treasurer Scott Morrison said the ban is evidence that "the rest of the world is catching up to Australia."

Labor's opposition to Trump has also been pathetic because they are so totally compromised by their support for offshore processing. They have been rendered mute rather than upset Trump and the US deal.

Although Trump hung up on Turnbull 25 minutes into the famous phone call and tweeted doubts about the deal, Prime Minister Turnbull still says there is a deal.

However, nothing but uncertainty comes out of the White House. The White House press secretary said the deal would go ahead, but insisted that refugees would be subject to "extreme vetting", without saying what "extreme vetting" is. In Trump's hands "extreme vetting" could be code for wide-scale rejection of refugee applications.

As President of the Refugee Council, Phil Glendenning, said, "If extreme vetting means more cruelty, more waiting, more limbo, more uncertainty, then that's not tolerable."

## Evacuate the camps

It was the final straw for refugee groups in Australia.

As Trump's announcements grew more inconsistent and the doubts surrounding the deal grew by the day, 70 organisations signed a joint statement calling on Turnbull and Bill Shorten, "to immediately evacuate the camps and bring these people to safety."

Since then even more doubts have emerged. While the White House says the deal refers to 1250 refugees, it seems there is no minimum figure regarding who will be resettled.

Worse, the government's own figures show that there are already



Above: Refugees on Nauru underneath one of their protest banners

1687 refugees on Nauru and Manus—and there will be more. Hundreds of people on Nauru are still waiting for their refugee assessments. But even on these figures, there are more than 400 refugees who will not get a place in the US resettlement deal.

The deal says priority will go to families and single women, which is a recipe for hundreds of people on Manus also being excluded from the deal.

## End the delays

People have been on Nauru and Manus for three and half years. Some people had interviews with US officials on Nauru in December. But US officials left Nauru in February with no indication of who had been accepted. There have been no secondary security interviews. And up to 200 people have not even had their first interview.

In any case, it is clear that any resettlement deal is going to take many, many months, possibly years. Trump's anti-refugee rhetoric has horrified some families—enough for them to reconsider going to a USA where Trump is whipping up anti-refugee sentiment.

The US deal was always a way for Australia to maintain its own wall to keep out refugees. It is time to abandon any idea that the US deal is a defensible solution to the three years of hell endured on Manus and Nauru.

Some people might still want to take up any offer to go to the US. They should have the right to do that. But that is no reason to keep them on Nauru for something that might never happen.

Hundreds of thousands of people in the US have taken to the streets to oppose Trump's ban and his proposed wall. Demonstrations against Trump and Turnbull have brought thousands onto the streets in Sydney and Melbourne. The disgust with Trump and Turnbull will help fuel the growing demands to abandon the US deal.

The Australian government is running out of options. The inquest into the death of Manus refugee, Faysal Ahmed, was told that the PNG government wants to have Manus Island closed by October.

The PNG and Australian governments have forcibly deported two Nepalese asylum seekers while they offer up to \$25,000 if people will return "voluntarily" to their home countries, as part of their push to clear the detention centre. But the Manus court case is set to re-open the possibilities to get orders that everyone be returned to Australia.

Big nation-wide rallies on Palm Sunday, 9 April, can galvanise some of the anti-Trump feeling and turn up the heat on Turnbull to bring the asylum seekers and refugees to Australia.

Even on their figures, there are more than 400 refugees who will not get a place in the US deal

**Solidarity**